



News conference: Appeal on Yarnell Hill Fire

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2013, 11 a.m.

8th Floor Conference

Good morning.

Let me start by thanking members of our congressional delegation and our state Legislature for joining us this morning, united and unwavering in our support of the communities devastated by the Yarnell Hill Fire.

I truly appreciate Representatives Gosar, Kirkpatrick, Franks and Sinema, and State Senator Pierce and Representative Fann for taking time out of their busy schedules to be here.

All of Arizona continues to mourn the unthinkable loss of the brave 19 firefighters in the Yarnell Hill Fire.

The deadliest fire in Arizona's history has been a traumatic, devastating event for all of Arizona, but most especially the communities of Yarnell, Peeples Valley and Prescott.

In addition to the tragic death of 19 heroes, many families lost their homes, with nothing to return to but embers. In fact, 20% of the homes in the Yarnell community were destroyed by the fire.

In July, President Obama called and Vice President Biden came to Arizona with the promise of help for these communities.

Unfortunately, the Administration later rejected Arizona's petition for an emergency declaration.

Such disaster relief would do so much for Arizona, not the least of which is help homeowners who lost everything – just as the federal government helps hurricane and other disaster victims.

I have decided to appeal FEMA's denial and I ask President Obama to re-evaluate Arizona's request and grant it.

An Emergency Declaration would assist those people affected by helping them pick up the pieces and begin rebuilding.

Our appeal highlights the high percentage of uninsured and underinsured homeowners. It also notes that more than half - 56 percent -- of the affected population is low income, making less than 25,000 dollars a year. And 36 percent are elderly.

In addition, we are asking the federal government for help with the significant environmental and flooding danger that is a likely result from the fire.

We also are requesting that the Small Business Administration independently move forward immediately with disaster assistance instead of waiting for the FEMA appeal to be processed and decided.

Arizonans – and Americans all across the nation – have shown amazing compassion and support since the fire. Again, we say thank you.

Today I ask President Obama to do the right thing and help these natural disaster victims rebuild their lives and move forward with the healing.

At this time, I am going to sign the letter of appeal that will be sent to the President.

Representative Gosar represents the area devastated by the Yarnell Hill Fire. Congressman, would you like to say a few words?

Again, I want to thank the members of our congressional delegation and our state legislators for their support of Arizona's efforts to obtain federal disaster assistance for the victims of the Yarnell Hill Fire.